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CIA Doublespeak Cloaks Proposals for Homespy and Datahide

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At a breakfast with reporters last March, Edwin Meese III, counselor to the president, stated flatly that the Reagan administration would not permit the CIA to spy on U.S. citizens here at home.

"The White House is absolutely opposed to the CIA becoming involved in domestic spying," Meese said. "We are not going to put the CIA into domestic espionage or the FBI into foreign intelligence."

Now comes a proposed executive order that would allow the CIA to

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infiltrate and influence domestic organizations, to conduct covert operations in this country, and to "collect, retain or disseminate information" about law-abiding Americans for a variety of new reasons.

Meese also held forth earlier this year on another topic involving U.S. intelligence: government secrets and their classification.

"I think there is way too much classification," Meese told *The Washington Post* in an interview published in July. "... I think that's one of the problems of government—that is, the overclassification of documents. You really should only classify something if its revelation would actually harm national security."

Now comes the somewhat refined draft of another executive order, this one for handling national security information.

It would eliminate the current rule saying that a document should not be classified unless its unauthorized disclosure would cause "identifiable damage" to the national security.

It would make the "Top Secret," "Secret" and "Confidential" stamps mandatory rather than discretionary.

And it would turn the existing reasonable-doubt standard upside down by telling officials to keep information secret whenever they have a "reasonable doubt" about the need to do that.

So what's going on here? Is the Reagan White House saying one thing and doing another? Has Ed Meese changed his mind?

The answer appears to be straight out of George Orwell's *Ministry of Truth*. The proposed executive order for the CIA and the other intelligence agencies, according to administration officials, does not really mean what it says. Nothing in it, according to administration officials, would expand the CIA's ability to engage in domestic espionage.

Criticisms of the draft decree, by the same token, are being assailed from the highest quarters as despicable "propaganda." News stories regarding CIA domestic spying have been labeled "deliberately misleading." The publicity, as Orwell's *NewSpeak* dictionary would put it, has been "doubleplusungood" and in need of "rewrite fullwise."

"As soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular number of the *Times* had been assembled and collated, that number would be reprinted,

the original copy destroyed, and the corrected copy placed on the files in its stead. This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters.... Day by day and almost minute by minute, the past was brought up to date." Orwell, 1984.

As for the proposed presidential proclamation to establish new classification practices, that, too, officials say, is being misread.

"I'm not saying you're going to have less classification under this order," says the man in charge of the drafting, Steven Garfinkel, director of the executive branch's Information Security Oversight Office. "But from my perception, the draft order is not intended to increase the material that's classified by any appreciable amount."

The key word is "intended." Apparently, Garfinkel is expecting government classifiers to continue to act pretty much the way they've always acted, classifying about as much as they usually do—which is to say too much. Garfinkel said many of the proposed changes from the existing order, issued by President Carter in 1978, were made primarily to get around court rulings and litigation "problems" concerning what should remain classified and what should not.

But then doesn't the new proposal have at least the potential of vastly increasing the amount of classified documents in the government's domain? Garfinkel was asked.

Garfinkel said he would rather not say.

The classification order is still weeks away from Reagan's desk. But the new order on intelligence activities, perhaps revised after months of